United Nations A/63/280

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 August 2008

Original: English

Sixty-third session
Item 67 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Promotion and protection of human rights: implementation of human rights instruments

Effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments on human rights

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the General Assembly the report of the chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies on their twentieth meeting, held at Geneva on 24 and 25 June 2008, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/202.

* A/63/150 and Corr.1.

08-46006 (E) 220908

Report of the chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies on their twentieth meeting

Summary

The General Assembly, in its resolution 57/202, requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Assembly the reports of the persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies on their periodic meetings. The present document contains the report on the twentieth meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies which was convened at Geneva on 24 and 25 June 2008, pursuant to Assembly resolution 49/178. The chairpersons considered follow-up to the recommendations of the nineteenth meeting and reviewed developments relating to the work of the treaty bodies. They also discussed reform of the treaty body system, including harmonization of working methods and the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council, as well as the work of the Council in general. They met with representatives of States parties and the President of the Human Rights Council. The tenth joint meeting of treaty body chairpersons, special rapporteurs/representatives, independent experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures of the Council was also held. Participants also met with representatives of the Conference Services Division of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The chairpersons adopted recommendations which are contained in section VII of the present report. The report on the seventh inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies which was held at Geneva, from 21 to 23 June 2008, and which was considered by the chairpersons, is annexed to the report.

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I. Introduction

1. The twentieth meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, convened pursuant to General Assembly resolution 49/178, was held at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at Geneva, on 26 and 27 June 2008. The meeting was immediately preceded by the seventh inter-committee meeting, held from 23 to 25 June 2008.

II. Organization of the meeting

2. The following chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies attended: the Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Philippe Texier; the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Fatima-Binta Victoire Dah; the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Dubravka Šimonović; the Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee, Rafael Rivas Posada; the Chairperson of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, Abdelhamid El-Jamri; the Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Yanghee Lee and the Chairperson of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, Silvia Casale. Fernando Marino-Menéndez represented the Committee against Torture.

3. Ms. Victoire Dah was elected Chairperson/Rapporteur of the meeting and Ms. Šimonović was elected Vice-Chairperson. The chairpersons adopted the agenda (HRI/MC/2008/1) and the proposed programme of work.

III. Meeting with the President of the Human Rights Council

4. The chairpersons met with the newly appointed President of the Human Rights Council, as well as with the former President of the Council. The President emphasized the complementary role of the treaty bodies and the Council and the role of the treaty bodies as a cornerstone of the universal periodic review mechanism, as well as their mutually reinforcing nature. He made various proposals for modalities to institutionalize the relationship between the Council and the treaty bodies.

5. The former President noted that the Council and the universal periodic review lacked a follow-up mechanism and that this continued to be a sensitive point for member States. He indicated that the Human Rights Council had strengthened the role of the treaty bodies by emphasizing the obligation of States parties to report and the importance of implementation of substantive treaty obligations and treaty body recommendations.

6. The chairpersons welcomed the proposal to create an institutional relationship between the treaty bodies and the Council, and suggested that this might include the practice of inviting treaty bodies to address the Council during thematic sessions. Some considered that treaty bodies should participate in the full deliberations of the Council. The chairpersons emphasized that it was important for treaty bodies to take into account the recommendations of the Council in the context of the universal periodic review, but were concerned about the absence of a mechanism for follow-

up in the Council. The Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights welcomed the recent adoption by the Council of the draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on individual complaints, and expressed his gratitude to the Chairperson of the Working Group for her dynamic role in that context.

IV. Tenth joint meeting of chairpersons of human rights treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders

7. On 26 June 2008, the chairpersons met with the mandate holders of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. The meeting was co-chaired by the Chairperson of the meeting of special rapporteurs/representatives, experts and chairpersons of working groups of the special procedures and the Chairperson of the meeting of Chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies.

8. Views were exchanged on follow-up to the recommendations of special procedures and treaty bodies, including in the context of the universal periodic review. The review, and the treaty bodies' and special procedures' processes were considered to be complementary and mutually reinforcing, with several treaty body chairpersons noting they would take into consideration the recommendations emerging from the review, as well as the pledges made by States during the review, when considering reports of States parties.

9. It was agreed that the level of cooperation and coordination between treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders could be strengthened. The importance of more direct interaction between the mechanisms was stressed. This could include participation of relevant mandate holders in treaty body sessions during consideration of the reports of States parties where the special procedures mandate holders could provide specific expertise and input. The participation of country-specific mandate holders was particularly important in cases where implementation of a treaty in the State party was being considered in the absence of a report. The key role of the Secretariat in ensuring exchange of information between treaty bodies and special procedures was highlighted, and, in this regard, it was suggested that financial resources be allocated for that purpose.

10. Participants underlined the importance of building on each other's recommendations, with one mandate holder indicating that he was able to engage in serious dialogues with Governments by basing his country recommendations on treaty body concluding observations. The Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights while countering terrorism proposed that the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights might consider preparing a general comment on the impact of counter-terrorism measures on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights. He said that his next report would focus on the impact of counter-terrorism measures on women and children and that he welcomed cooperation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. The possibility of special procedures mandate holders visiting States prior to their consideration by treaty bodies was also proposed.

V. Informal consultations with States parties

11. The twentieth meeting of chairpersons held informal consultations with the representatives of 72 States parties on 26 June 2008, with the chairpersons outlining recent developments in their respective committees and noting a number of innovative approaches towards simplification of the treaty body system and improvement and harmonization of working methods. In this respect, they referred the States parties to the points of agreement of the seventh inter-committee meeting.

12. The Chairperson of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights welcomed the adoption by the Human Rights Council of the draft Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Other chairpersons described, inter alia, follow-up procedures; consideration of implementation of human rights treaties in States parties in the absence of a report (the review procedure); the possibility of issuing joint general comments/recommendations on thematic issues, including a possible joint general comment of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on female migrant workers; the need for strengthened interaction between the treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council; universal periodic review; indivisibility between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights; and the need for additional meeting time.

13. States welcomed the opportunity to engage in consultations with the chairpersons, noting that they provided a platform for dialogue and interaction, and reiterated their support for the work of the treaty bodies. Several States commended the treaty bodies for their continued engagement in the process of reform and their preparedness to test new approaches, adopt innovative working methods and explore areas for harmonization.

14. States encouraged strengthened harmonization and coordination of the working methods of the treaty bodies, including in the examination of reports and follow-up procedures, so as to make the system more comprehensible and accessible.

15. Several States referred to the need to harmonize the form and structure of lists of issues, noting that lists of issues could help States to prepare for the dialogue and to pinpoint problems. The point was made that treaty bodies should exchange best practices and challenges in that respect. The possibility of treaty bodies formulating a limited number of questions which would focus on the major issues to be raised during the dialogue was also put forward. Some States stressed the importance of the lists of issues being transmitted to States parties well in advance to allow sufficient time for the preparation of replies. Noting that several States parties had referred to the lists of issues, the chairpersons expressed the view that it might be difficult to harmonize the approach to such lists completely, as the questions were linked to the content of the respective treaties. However, the time frame for their preparation and submission and their length might be harmonized.

16. Several States parties noted that non-reporting was a serious problem and wished to be informed of strategies that treaty bodies were developing in that regard. Some States emphasized that the review procedures should be used only as a last resort measure, while a few noted that that approach should be avoided. Others considered that treaty bodies should harmonize their approaches in that context. A number of States welcomed the possibility of the provision of technical assistance

by the Office of the United Nations High Commissions for Human Rights (OHCHR) for non-reporting States.

17. Several States encouraged treaty bodies to continue their cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and national human rights institutions, and suggested that information from NGOs should be used more effectively. A number of States noted that there was a need to institute a process of verification in respect of NGO information and that that information should be cross-checked, along the lines of the universal periodic review procedure. The importance of the equitable geographical participation of NGOs was stressed, as was the need for continued cooperation between treaty bodies and national human rights institutions, including through the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights.

18. A large number of States noted that the treaty body system and the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council should complement and mutually reinforce each other. It was generally agreed that the review should not duplicate existing mechanisms and that there was a need to create positive synergies between it and the treaty body system. Many States emphasized the independent role and rationale of treaty bodies vis-à-vis the review. Some States parties referred to their own experiences in the context of the first two review sessions, both as States under review and when reviewing others, during which there had been several references to treaty body recommendations and the need to ratify the core treaties to which the State was not yet a party. Some States noted that the universal periodic review could provide an additional tool for following up on treaty body recommendations and vice versa.

19. In respect of concluding observations, a few States noted that the treaty bodies should learn from the universal periodic review format and include any State responses as part of the concluding observations, inter alia, by annexing the responses to the concluding observations. It was suggested that that approach would form an agreed and mutual basis for engagement. Other States emphasized that there should be a clear distinction between treaty bodies who ensured compliance with legal, binding norms and the Human Rights Council as a political body.

20. A number of States noted that they supported the exercise and the joint work undertaken by OHCHR and treaty body experts on indicators, but considered that the outcome would be successful only if there were full involvement of States parties which would be applying the indicators and would be evaluated on the basis of those indicators. It was also important to take different levels of development into account.

21. Some States stressed that the comments and suggestions put forward in the course of the informal consultations should be given due regard and that the chairpersons' meeting should reflect on how this could be done in the best possible way. A number of States supported the treaty bodies, including the more recently established among them, in their request for more human and financial resources.

VI. Meeting with the Conference Services Division of the United Nations Office at Geneva

22. On 27 June 2008, the chairpersons met with representatives from the Conference Services Division of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The Chief of the Document Management Section explained that, since the creation of the Human Rights Council, in June 2006, Conference Services had absorbed a 20 per cent workload increase, and that that trend was expected to continue with the establishment of the new treaty bodies. He stressed that efforts should be made by treaty body secretaries to comply with deadlines for the submission and processing of documents, as well as with the rules on length and format. Prioritization of documents in order to facilitate the work of Conference Services and timely processing was also suggested.

23. The chairpersons raised concerns regarding the frequent unavailability in all working languages of States parties' reports, written replies to lists of issues, and individual communications, which compromised their work. They also expressed concern about the level of financial and human resources allocated to the processing and translation of treaty body documents since the establishment of the Human Rights Council. They agreed that treaty body secretaries should endeavour to establish priorities to facilitate the translation of concluding observations, written replies of States parties to lists of issues and views on individual communications. States parties should be reminded to respect page limits and deadlines for the submission of reports.

VII. Decisions and recommendations

24. The twentieth meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies culminated in the following decisions and recommendations:

Adoption of the points of agreement of the inter-committee meeting

(a) The twentieth meeting of chairpersons endorsed the points of agreement concluded at the seventh inter-committee meeting, held from 23 to 25 June 2008. The chairpersons called upon the human rights treaty bodies to follow up on those recommendations and to report on their implementation at the ninth inter-committee meeting in 2009.

Relationship with special procedures mandate holders

(b) The twentieth meeting of chairpersons reiterated earlier recommendations of the chairpersons that the Secretariat should seek ways and means to facilitate interaction between the treaty bodies and the special procedures, not only during the annual joint meetings, but also with respect to strengthening direct interaction, as appropriate, during sessions of the treaty bodies. This was considered especially crucial with respect to the consideration of a State party in the absence of a report where a country rapporteur would be able to provide important

information. The chairpersons and the special procedures agreed to organize future joint meetings in a more structured fashion and requested the Secretariat to prepare a list of common procedural and thematic issues to be discussed at their eleventh joint meeting.

Informal consultations with States parties

(c) Given the fact that the informal consultations with States parties provided an important platform for dialogue and interaction, the twentieth meeting of chairpersons recommended that a full one-day meeting should be allocated for the informal consultations with States parties in the context of the twenty-first meeting of chairpersons in 2009. The chairpersons requested the Secretariat to prepare a specific and focused agenda for this meeting.

Human Rights Council

(d) The chairpersons underlined the complementary and mutually reinforcing nature of the treaty body system and the universal periodic review mechanism and emphasized the importance of a continuing dialogue on this matter. The chairpersons further recognized the need for developing an effective cooperation between the treaty bodies and the Human Rights Council and strengthening the institutional links between the two systems. They also encouraged the Human Rights Council to extend invitations to the treaty bodies to participate in its sessions, especially during thematic discussions. Finally, the chairpersons highlighted the useful practice of certain treaty bodies of designating observers to follow the universal periodic review in the Council and suggested that this be extended to all treaty bodies.

Treaty body documentation

(e) The twentieth meeting of chairpersons recommended that treaty body secretaries should make all possible efforts to prioritize documents submitted to Conference Services to ensure the timely translation of concluding observations, States parties' written replies, as well as views on individual communications. The Secretariat should also remind States parties to respect page limits and deadlines for the submission of reports. In addition, the meeting of chairpersons recommended the augmentation of human and financial resources in order to allow for the timely processing and translation of treaty body documents.

Annex

Report of the seventh inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies

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I. Introduction

1. The seventh inter-committee meeting of the human rights treaty bodies was held at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) at Geneva from 23 to 25 June 2008.

2. The following members of human rights treaty bodies attended:

Human Rights Committee
Rafael Rivas Posada (Chairperson)
Abdelfattah Amor
Michael O'Flaherty

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Dubravka Šimonović (Chairperson)
Dorcas Coker-Appiah
Mary Shanthi Dairiam

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
Fatima-Binta Victoire Dah (Chairperson)
Regis De Gouttes
Anwar Kemal

Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture
Mario Coriolano

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Philippe Texier (Chairperson)
Rocio Barahona Riera
Waleed Sadi

Committee on the Rights of the Child
Yanghee Lee (Chairperson)
Lothar Friedrich Krappmann
Lucy Smith

Committee against Torture
Claudio Grossmann (Chairperson)
Felice Gaer
Fernando Mariño

Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
Ahmed Hassan El-Bora (Chairperson)
Jose S. Brillantes

II. Opening of the meeting, election of officers and adoption of the agenda

3. The Chief of the Human Rights Treaties Branch, Ibrahim Salama, welcomed all chairpersons and members present on behalf of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. He introduced the report on the implementation of the recommendations of the sixth inter-committee meeting and the nineteenth meeting of chairpersons (HRI/MC/2008/2), which provided information on the efforts undertaken by the treaty bodies to streamline further their working methods and enhance their effectiveness. He indicated that three committees had adopted treaty-specific guidelines, taking into account the revised harmonized guidelines on reporting using a common core document, and that others had begun work on their guidelines. Several States parties had submitted common core documents. Mr. Salama also highlighted the entry into force of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and the adoption, by the Human Rights Council, of an Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

4. Fatima-Binta Victoire Dah, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, was elected Chairperson/Rapporteur and Dubravka Šimonović, Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination

against Women, was elected Vice-Chairperson. The participants adopted the agenda (HRI/ICM/2008/1) and the programme of work.

III. Follow-up to the recommendations of the sixth inter-committee meeting of human rights treaty bodies

5. Since the sixth inter-committee meeting, the treaty bodies had continued to discuss and implement innovative approaches to harmonize working methods to render the treaty body system more effective.

6. The Committee against Torture had adopted general comment 2 on implementation of article 2 by States parties. It had met several times with the newly created Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (the Subcommittee), but drew attention to the limited linkage of the Convention with the Optional Protocol, as outlined in its provisions, and flagged the fact that there was no overlap in the membership of the two treaty bodies. The two committees had discussed country visits, particularly as one of the first States visited by the Subcommittee was a State party which was to be considered by the Committee against Torture; the Optional Protocol provided that the Subcommittee's annual report be submitted to that Committee, which had yet to consider the former's first annual report. The Committee against Torture considered the universal periodic review to be a challenge and noted that at least two of the countries to be considered by it had also been subject to the review. No country had failed to submit or present its universal periodic review report to the Council, nor had any indicated that reporting constituted a burden, whereas a number of reports of States parties required by the Convention against Torture were 20 years overdue. The representative of the Committee against Torture drew attention to its new procedure of formulating lists of issues prior to reporting, in which responses from States parties would constitute periodic reports. He noted that a number of States parties had accepted the procedure and that consideration of the resulting reports would commence in 2010. The Committee had also adopted a new approach to national human rights institutions. The representative indicated that its practice of convening formal, private meetings with NGOs one day prior to the consideration of reports had been successful, noting that all NGO submissions were required to be in writing and were submitted to the relevant State party. The follow-up procedure of the Committee against Torture, which it considered to have significant potential, had attracted an extremely good response. The Committee had not discussed whether the identity of country rapporteurs should be made public, but, in practice, it did not object to their identity being known. At its fortieth session, the Committee had requested the Secretariat to prepare draft treaty-specific reporting guidelines, taking account of the guidelines for the common core document.

7. The representative of the Committee on the Rights of the Child pointed out that, in the light of the large number of States parties to the Convention and its two Optional Protocols, the regular submission by States parties of reports and the backlog of 90 reports that awaited consideration, it would again request the General Assembly to authorize it to meet in parallel chambers. The Committee on the Rights of the Child systematically made cross-references to other treaties in its concluding observations, and had had good experiences with following up these observations through regional workshops, including the most recent, which had been convened in

Burkina Faso in November 2007. The Committee had strong links with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), had participated in a day-long joint workshop with the Fund prior to its most recent session, and had observer status in respect of the UNICEF Executive Board. The Committee had established a working group on harmonized working methods and had adopted a new format for its list of issues at its forty-eighth session. Representatives of NGOs, national human rights institutions and children participated in the Committee's pre-sessional working group. The Committee commenced discussion of draft guidelines for its treaty-specific document, which would include reporting requirements for the Convention and its Optional Protocols at its forty-eighth session in May/June 2008. It was also following discussions on the possible development of an individual complaints system for the Convention, and was interested in developing indicators on children in early childhood, emphasizing the need for readily available statistical information.

8. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had adopted guidelines for its treaty-specific document at its seventy-first session in August 2007. It did not convene a pre-sessional working group and lists of issues relating to reports to be considered were prepared by country rapporteurs, whose identities were not made public. The lists of issues were informal, and were not adopted by the Committee. The Committee's urgent action and early warning procedures had been improved. The former was triggered where the Committee received no response from the State party to its reporting reminders; thereafter consideration took place on the basis of information available to the Committee, rather than on the basis of the State party's report. A coordinator for follow-up considered implementation of recommendations in the concluding observations. The Committee's rules of procedure provided that national human rights institutions may, with the consent of the State party, intervene on the day of consideration of the State party's report. NGOs were encouraged to submit shadow reports, preferably at an early stage. The Committee collaborated with the special procedures mandate holders on racism, minorities and genocide. It also worked closely with the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Effective Implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action.

9. The representative of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed the hope that the Optional Protocol to the Covenant would be adopted by the General Assembly at its sixty-third session. During 2007-2008, the Committee had considered the reports of 17 States parties and had adopted a general comment on article 9 on the right to social security. There were a large number of ratifications to the Covenant and a backlog of reports awaiting consideration was developing. The Committee had institutionalized the practice of a half-day dialogue with NGOs, and often received reports from national human rights institutions. Some States parties' reports were considered to be too brief or incomplete, with some States suggesting that fuller information was contained in their common core document. The Committee highlighted its recent meeting on the role of national institutions in the protection of economic, social and cultural rights, which had been financed by the University of Alcalá (Madrid), the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (*Agencia Española de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo* (AECID)) and the Iberó-American Ombudsman's Federation, and encouraged all treaty bodies to participate in those types of meetings.

10. The Human Rights Committee had considered 13 reports since the last inter-committee meeting, taking up 4 reports per session, and had adopted a general comment on article 14 on the right to equality before the courts and tribunals and to a fair trial. Its follow-up procedure was working well, but could be strengthened. It held meetings with NGOs during the first day of its formal session, as well as in early morning and lunch time briefings. No formal procedure for interaction with national human rights institutions had been adopted, although the Committee met with those bodies. A rapporteur and a focal point had been appointed to maintain liaison with United Nations system entities and with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on genocide, respectively. A rapporteur had also been appointed to observe the universal periodic review. In addition, the Human Rights Committee was developing a media strategy. Concern was expressed at the length of some States parties' reports, which often contained repetition; representatives of the Committee emphasized the need for clear guidelines to assist in the preparation of periodic reports. Steps to harmonize the approach to lists of issues might also be considered. The identities of country rapporteurs and country task force members were not made public. It was also noted with concern that the Committee's work had been hampered by delays in the provision of documentation and translations.

11. The Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families currently met twice annually in two-week sessions, and was proposing to meet in one-week sessions in future. The Committee collaborated closely with the International Labour Organization and was seeking to cooperate with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in the elaboration of a joint general comment on women and migration. The Committee was grateful to other treaty bodies which encouraged ratification of the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. As a new treaty body with a treaty with limited ratification, the Committee had not formulated a position on the harmonized reporting guidelines; it would also welcome more information about consideration of implementation of treaties in a State party in the absence of a report. It was of the view that treaty body reports should form the basis of the universal periodic review.

12. The fortieth session of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, held in January 2008, had been the first formal session serviced by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights at Geneva, although it had met in 2007 at Geneva in an informal session hosted by the Government of Switzerland. In 2006 and 2007, the Committee had convened three sessions per year in parallel chambers and had examined a total of 69 reports. Three sessions would be held in 2008 and two during 2009; three of the five sessions would be held in two chambers. As of 2010, the Committee would convene three annual sessions. The meeting time for treaty bodies should respond to needs, and the Committee supported the request of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for additional meeting time. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had decided to review implementation of the Convention in States parties in the absence of a report in cases where no report had been submitted despite a number of reminders. It was developing general recommendations on article 2 of the Convention on measures of implementation and on women migrant workers, possibly jointly with the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The formulation of a joint general recommendation would be challenging, owing to the different working pace of each

Committee, as well as the lack of time to meet jointly. The Committee supported the proposal for two annual inter-committee meetings, and its efforts towards harmonization had included the adoption of its treaty-specific reporting guidelines and the amendment of its terminology from concluding "comments" to concluding "observations". A short informal paper which aimed to encourage NGOs to submit joint submissions which focused on priority issues in the States parties concerned, was under preparation. The Committee was also considering its relationship with parliaments and had adopted a statement on its relations with national human rights institutions. Concluding observations included a standard paragraph encouraging ratification of other human rights treaties, and cross-references to the work of other treaty bodies were included where relevant.

IV. Discussion on the improvement and harmonization of working methods

13. Participants discussed improvement and harmonization of the treaty body working methods, considering a non-paper on possible areas of harmonization which had been prepared by the Secretariat. The non-paper focused on three possible areas of harmonization, namely: (a) the form and structure of lists of issues; (b) publication of the identity of country rapporteurs and country task force members; and (c) the consideration of implementation of human rights treaties in States parties in the absence of a report. An updated version of the comparative chart of working methods which had been requested by the inter-committee working group on harmonization in April 2007 was included as annex 1. A template with draft guidelines for the elaboration of lists of issues was included as annex 2.

14. In addition to the three areas addressed by the non-paper, participants identified a number of other potential areas for harmonization. They included follow-up to concluding observations and follow-up workshops, the role of the country rapporteur; input and output in the context of the universal periodic review; cross-references to the work of other treaty bodies; modalities of the participation of NGOs and national human rights institutions; standardization of treaty body terminology, the development of joint general comments and consideration of reports.

15. The meeting agreed to develop a programme of work on possible areas for improvement and harmonization of working methods, including targets, short and long-term objectives, and timelines for the next three to four inter-committee meetings.

16. In relation to the lists of issues, participants stressed the difference in the scope and nature of the different treaties and hence in the substantive content of the lists of issues. While all committees prepared lists of issues, the practice of their preparation and their role in enhancing the work of the committees varied. Lists of issues were not formally adopted by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, but were prepared by the designated country rapporteurs with respect to the reports of States parties assigned to them. Some participants recognized that a certain similarity as to the form and structure of the lists of issues, including a limited number of questions, might assist States parties in their reporting. In that respect, some participants suggested a maximum of 25 questions. Participants looked forward to the results of the Commission against Torture

developing practice of lists of issues prior to reporting, but noted that questions arose, including on the type of information that formed the basis for such lists.

17. The participants also discussed the experience of various treaty bodies in relation to the disclosure of the identity of country rapporteurs and country task force members. Most committees noted that they appointed one member (two in the case of the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families and one to three in the case of the Human Rights Committee) to act as country rapporteurs. Except in the case of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the identity of the country rapporteur was public, with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women deciding to take this approach during 2007. A number of participants noted that they were in favour of harmonizing practices of treaty bodies in this context, and attention was drawn to the fact that harmonization on this issue had also been requested by States parties and others. Others had examples of both direct and indirect pressure being put on the country rapporteur(s) and would therefore favour confidentiality in this context.

18. Most committees noted that they had adopted the practice, sometimes referred to as the "review procedure", of examining the implementation of the relevant treaty in the State party in the absence of a report. Participants generally agreed that according to the practice of different treaty bodies, notification by a committee to a State party of its intention to examine a country situation in the absence of a report could be a very effective way of engaging non-reporting States parties, as they were generally prompted to submit the overdue report, or would signal their intention to do so. Examination of States parties in the absence of a report should be a measure of last resort, with the focus being on engaging in a constructive dialogue with the State party concerned. The possibility of adopting common modalities was discussed, with participants stressing the importance of providing States parties one last opportunity, via a reminder, to submit its report. In the absence of a response from the State party, the treaty bodies would often formulate and transmit a list of issues to the State party. In the absence of a reply from the State party, some committees, such as the Human Rights Committee, adopted provisional concluding observations, while others, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, formulated public and final concluding observations.

19. Participants agreed that follow-up was of great significance and needed to be discussed further. One participant suggested that the follow-up rapporteurs, if applicable, or other representatives of the various committees, could meet and discuss best practices and exchange ideas in respect of follow-up to concluding observations, as well as follow-up workshops. The suggestion was made that an inter-committee working group or task force could be established for that purpose. The point was also made that there should be a discussion on common means of improving the follow-up procedure.

20. Several participants stressed the importance of the participation of NGOs and national human rights institutions in treaty body processes and noted that that should be discussed at a future inter-committee meeting. The possibility of developing joint general comments was also raised. The experiences of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their

Families in relation to the draft general comment on women migrant workers was raised and the suggestion was made that treaty body members should consider topics for possible joint general comments.

21. It was agreed that the working methods of human rights treaty bodies required improvement and possibly harmonization and that one of the two annual inter-committee meetings should be dedicated exclusively to the improvement and harmonization of working methods. It was also decided that the agenda items for the eighth inter-committee meeting would be: the revised treaty-specific guidelines; follow-up to concluding observations; consideration of a State party in the absence of a report; and the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council.

V. Human Rights Council

22. Participants were briefed on the universal periodic review mechanism by a representative of OHCHR. Reference was made to the compilation of information prepared by OHCHR based, to a large extent on the recommendations of treaty bodies and special procedures mandate holders. It was noted that members of the universal periodic review working group often referred to treaty body recommendations in their interventions.

23. While acknowledging the importance of the universal periodic review mechanism with regard to follow-up on treaty body recommendations, concerns raised by participants included, inter alia: the fact that the wording of recommendations could be negotiated by the State under review, which could seriously undermine the process; the need to avoid duplication of work between treaty bodies and the universal periodic review; and the limited capacity for follow-up to the review recommendations. It was suggested that the treaty bodies could follow up on the review recommendations during their consideration of State parties' reports.

VI. Dialogue with specialized agencies, funds and programmes and other entities of the United Nations

24. The inter-committee meeting met with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Coordinator on follow-up to Conventions and Recommendations in the field of education. The representative recognized that the effective implementation of standard-setting texts was at the core of effective fulfilment of State party obligations, and emphasized the importance of enhancing monitoring. He noted that UNESCO collaboration with the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families had focused on normative action taken in the field of education. UNESCO hoped that the recommendations made by the Human Rights Council would emphasize those normative aspects and that any future joint statements would take into account the right to education.

25. One member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasized that the right to education was one of its core focal areas and that it had, in the past, received very good contributions from UNESCO on countries under review. It encouraged UNESCO to participate in the Committee's pre-sessions, submit written information and make oral contributions and enhance its future cooperation with the Committee. A member from the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women also noted that the Committee had received valuable information from UNESCO, including on statistical information, and expressed the hope that a deeper collaboration could be developed with UNESCO and other United Nations specialized agencies.

VII. Dialogue with non-governmental organizations

26. Representatives of the following NGOs presented a joint submission to the seventh inter-committee meeting: Amnesty International, Association for the Prevention of Torture; International Women's Rights Action Watch; International Service for Human Rights; International Women's Rights Action Watch (Asia-Pacific); NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Save the Children; World Organisation against Torture; Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quaker United Nations Office) and ARC International. The NGO representatives requested that the seventh inter-committee meeting consider the following issues as priorities in order to enhance the effectiveness of human rights treaty monitoring bodies and improve NGO contributions to the treaty bodies' procedures:

(a) Development, publication and maintenance of a calendar of treaty body sessions on the OHCHR website;

(b) NGOs should be able to request that their source be kept confidential while the information is being considered by the treaty body concerned;

(c) Oral briefings by NGOs should be formally scheduled during treaty body sessions and treaty bodies should be encouraged to develop their approaches on the basis of best practices identified in certain committees;

(d) Procedures for effective follow-up to concluding observations should be adopted, including through the appointment of a rapporteur on follow-up, and the treaty bodies should consider developing modalities for consideration of NGO information on follow-up;

(e) A common, transparent procedure for consulting on, and drafting of, general comments should be developed which would include soliciting and considering broad contributions from NGOs, academics, other experts, United Nations and regional bodies;

(f) Criteria for treaty body membership should be considered;

(g) The inter-committee meeting should institutionalize the relationship between NGOs and treaty bodies in a purposeful way.

27. Participants of the inter-committee meeting noted that openness and transparency should be guiding principles and that information from NGOs should be considered confidential in exceptional circumstances only, while others

highlighted that some States objected to information being utilized by treaty bodies without their knowledge of the source.

28. Some participants stressed that the best time for NGO input was during the process of drafting the lists of issues. The presence of NGOs during the consideration of the States parties' reports was also found to be useful, as it raised the visibility of the performance of the State party's delegation. Participants appreciated the recommendations put forward by the NGOs in respect of follow-up, including the need to have increased Secretariat support for follow-up activities and noted that the resources for the Human Rights Treaties Branch had decreased with the expansion of the universal periodic review. One participant noted the absence of NGO information on follow-up. Some participants referred to their practice of consulting NGOs when developing general comments.

29. The process of election of treaty body experts and their independence was also discussed. One participant suggested that NGOs might make an informal assessment of the level of independence of members, which could be influential in the context of their possible re-election. NGOs were encouraged to provide information on all States parties whose reports were going to be considered by treaty bodies, and endeavour to create NGO coalitions to facilitate the participation of national NGOs.

30. In terms of the universal periodic review, one NGO noted that States had used the compilations prepared by OHCHR to highlight compliance with the international human rights treaties; ratifications; address legislative gaps in achieving full compliance with the treaties; withdrawal of reservations; regular reporting and reporting under the follow-up procedure. Many of these recommendations had been accepted by States under review, and thus formed part of the final review report. Treaty bodies were encouraged to continue to review their concluding observations to ensure that common trends, and priority recommendations, are identified.

VIII. Discussion on statistical information

31. Martin Scheinin and a representative of OHCHR introduced the report on indicators for monitoring compliance with international human rights instruments (HRI/MC/2008/3) which had been prepared by OHCHR in response to a recommendation of the fifth inter-committee meeting, in June 2006, that the Secretariat undertake a validation of the approach on the use of statistical information in States parties' reports, develop further lists of indicators and submit a report on that work to the seventh inter-committee meeting in 2008. The report outlined the conceptual and methodological framework for identifying the relevant quantitative indicators as it had evolved over the past two years and outlined the results from regional and country-level consultations and feedback from the validation exercises. An update on progress achieved in relation to the use of statistical information, including in the context of country-level consultations, to validate the conceptual and methodological framework and the development of further lists of indicators had also been provided.

32. Participants welcomed the information contained in the report and suggested that consideration be given to the formulation of a joint general comment on the obligation of States to provide statistical data in their reports to treaty bodies. Concerns put forward by the participants included: the absence of indicators on non-discrimination; the lack of a gender perspective; the lack of indicators covering

the rights of the child; and the fact that process indicators did not always coincide with the outcome.

IX. Dialogue with the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture

33. Participants met with Silvia Casale, Chairperson of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (the Subcommittee), and Mario Coriolano, member of the Subcommittee. Ms. Casale briefed the meeting on the recent activities of the Subcommittee, including its visits to Benin, Maldives, Mauritius and Sweden, and highlighted the importance of treaty body concluding observations for the preparation of country visits, including country briefs. She indicated that the Subcommittee had found the universal periodic review documentation particularly useful in the case of Benin.

34. Mr. Coriolano referred to the work of the national preventive mechanisms which he perceived as key actors of the network for the prevention of torture. He stressed that this network, which also included the Subcommittee, should cooperate with treaty bodies and regional mechanisms. Participants highlighted the fact that the principle of independence of national preventive mechanisms was an indispensable criterion for their efficiency and effectiveness. The complementarities between the work of the Subcommittee and the treaty bodies were also underlined.

X. Dialogue on business and human rights

35. Participants met with a representative of OHCHR, who presented the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, John Ruggie, to the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/8/5). The OHCHR representative noted that the report presented a conceptual and policy framework to anchor the business and human rights debate, and to help guide all relevant actors. The framework comprised three core principles, as follows: the State duty to protect against human rights abuses by third parties, including business; the corporate responsibility to respect human rights; and the need for more effective access to remedies.

36. The Special Representative had conducted comprehensive research in 2006-2007, together with OHCHR, on the ways in which treaty bodies considered the roles of States parties, in regulating and adjudicating corporate activities in light of human rights. He had concluded that:

(a) The treaties, as interpreted by the treaty bodies, required States to play a key role in regulating and adjudicating corporate activities regarding rights capable of abuse by private parties, at least concerning activities affecting individuals within States' effective control. This role was generally considered as part of the State duty to protect against abuse by third parties;

(b) No treaty body had elaborated dedicated general comments or recommendations specifically relating to State duties vis-à-vis corporate activities. However, general comments and recommendations, concluding observations, opinions and decisions from the past decade imposed increasing pressure on States to fulfil the duty to protect in relation to corporate activities, regardless of whether the relevant entities are State-owned;

(c) According to treaty bodies, States must generally monitor compliance by third parties and in most cases introduce legislative measures to prohibit abuse and proscribe certain behaviour;

(d) Concluding observations focused on the State duty to protect vis-à-vis business activities rather than any direct obligations for business enterprises under international law.

37. There were several areas in which the treaty bodies might assist States parties, corporations and individuals to understand their rights and obligations better. Those included: (a) the scope and content of the State duty to protect vis-à-vis corporate activities; (b) whether States should regulate the acts of natural persons within offending enterprises or the enterprise itself; (c) whether the treaties require States to regulate the overseas acts of "their" corporations; (d) the nature of States' obligations regarding State-owned or controlled companies; and (e) the nature and origin of corporate responsibilities under the treaties.

38. Participants welcomed the information provided but emphasized that the responsibility to protect human rights was an obligation of States parties which should be held accountable for violations committed by private actors, including transnational corporations and other business enterprises. Concern was also raised regarding the lack of information received from NGOs and national human rights institutions on corporate activities and their impact on human rights. Their monitoring role was perceived as essential in this area. The role of the media was also considered to be a valuable tool which could bring attention to human rights violations perpetrated by transnational corporations and other business enterprises.

XI. Dialogue on the United Nations study on violence against children

39. The focal point on the follow-up to the United Nations study on violence against children noted that the independent expert leading the study had presented a progress report (A/62/209) to the General Assembly in October 2007. According to the report, the study had succeeded in raising global awareness of a problem frequently hidden and in providing a structured framework for action. However, inadequate implementation of legal frameworks, as well as reactive and fragmented efforts, insufficiently funded and focusing narrowly on symptoms and consequences of violence, remained a threat to sustainability and long-term success in the protection of children from violence. The need to invest further in prevention, training, recovery and social reintegration services, as well as to strengthen data-collection systems on violence against children were highlighted as priorities in the progress report. The report further stressed that, while some progress was evident in such areas as violence in educational settings, trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation and some forms of child labour, little evidence was provided with regard to progress in addressing violence in the home and family, violence related to new technologies, violence in care and justice institutions or violence perpetrated by State agents and gangs.

40. Possible areas of cooperation with treaty bodies were discussed. For instance, a list of standard questions on violence against children under the different treaties to be included in the lists of issues could be developed. Treaty bodies could consider

developing joint general comments on issues related to violence against children or including specific focus on related issues in general comments addressing a broader population. The same would apply to days of general discussions. In the context of country visits and/or inquiries, treaty bodies were encouraged to systematically include a specific focus on children, including through meetings and consultation with the children themselves and with child-focused governmental agencies and institutions and NGOs. The Committee against Torture and the Subcommittee were particularly encouraged to visit places where children were deprived of their liberty.

41. Participants stressed that both NGOs and national human rights institutions had a fundamental role to play in monitoring violence against children. The need to develop indicators was highlighted. Participants agreed that a discussion on the respective approaches of treaty bodies to violence against children would be essential.

XII. Points of agreement of the seventh inter-committee meeting

42. The seventh inter-committee meeting decided on the following points of an agreement, to be transmitted to the twentieth meeting of chairpersons:

Inter-committee meeting

(a) The seventh inter-committee meeting reiterated the view that the inter-committee meeting provided a useful forum for discussing matters of mutual concern and strengthening coordination among the treaty bodies, and recommended that the General Assembly consider the possibility of convening such meetings on a regular basis.

(b) Further to the recommendation of the sixth inter-committee meeting that the inter-committee meeting should meet twice annually, the seventh inter-committee meeting recommended that one of its two annual meetings be dedicated exclusively to the improvement and harmonization of working methods of the human rights treaty bodies.

(c) The seventh inter-committee meeting decided that the agenda items for the eighth inter-committee meeting would be the following: the revised treaty-specific guidelines; follow-up to concluding observations; consideration of a State party in the absence of a report; and the universal periodic review mechanism of the Human Rights Council.

Revised harmonized reporting guidelines

(d) Noting that some treaty bodies had adopted revised guidelines for treaty-specific documents on reporting under the international human rights treaties, the seventh inter-committee meeting encouraged the remaining treaty bodies to complete the adoption of their revised guidelines by the end of 2009. It reiterated that the approved harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (as contained in document HRI/GEN/2/Rev.5) should be used by States parties when submitting a report to any human rights treaty body.

Follow-up to concluding observations

(e) The seventh inter-committee meeting reiterated its previous recommendation that each treaty body consider adopting a procedure to ensure effective follow-up to concluding observations, such as the appointment of a rapporteur on follow-up or any other appropriate mechanism. It also recommended that additional resources be allocated to follow-up activities, especially for workshops, meetings and country visits and that treaty body members be more involved in those activities;

(f) The seventh inter-committee meeting noted the importance of follow-up to concluding observations and recommended that a working group on harmonization and/or identification of best practices in respect of follow-up be established either intersessionally or during the eighth inter-committee meeting, consisting, among other things, of the rapporteur for follow-up on concluding observations of each treaty body, if applicable, or the members responsible for follow-up activities. The working group should report back to the ninth inter-committee meeting in 2009 on its findings.

(g) The seventh inter-committee meeting recommended that any follow-up provide for a periodic qualitative assessment of the implementation of concluding observations. Such assessment should be conducted in open meetings.

Follow-up to decisions on individual complaints

(h) The seventh inter-committee meeting also reaffirmed the importance of consolidating, and possibly strengthening, the procedures in place for following up on decisions on individual complaints.

Consideration of a State party in the absence of a report

(i) The seventh inter-committee meeting noted that the absence of State party reports on treaty implementation, including initial reports, affected all treaty bodies. While the consideration of a report, as well as the establishment of a constructive dialogue with States parties, will always be the objective of treaty bodies, long overdue initial and periodic reports would seriously hamper the monitoring mandate of treaty bodies and the implementation of treaty provisions. Non-reporting States should be reminded of their overdue reporting obligations and encouraged to report, and, as a last resort, treaty bodies should consider reviewing the implementation of treaties in the absence of a report and adopt concluding observations in that respect.

(j) The seventh inter-committee meeting requested the Secretariat to produce a list of non-reporting States, including initial and periodic. Each non-reporting State should be considered in accordance with its specific situation, taking into account, in particular, the overdue period, the human rights situation in the country and any specific difficulties that the State party might face. OHCHR is encouraged to engage in capacity-building and technical assistance activities, in particular, through its regional and field presences.

Human Rights Council

(k) The seventh inter-committee meeting took note of the proceedings of the first two sessions of the universal periodic review mechanism. It recommended that the secretariat routinely make available to the treaty bodies the compilations prepared by OHCHR, in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) of the annex to Human Rights Council resolution 5/1. Concluding observations and recommendations of all treaty bodies should be given due regard in the compilation of United Nations sources prepared by OHCHR. Treaty bodies may consider referring to the pledges and commitments made by States parties in the course of the universal periodic review in their dialogue with States parties. The seventh inter-committee meeting also commended the practice of certain treaty bodies of designating observers to follow the universal periodic review in the Council and suggested that that practice be extended to all treaty bodies.

(l) In the light of the additional resources provided to the OHCHR for the universal periodic review process, the seventh inter-committee meeting recommended that OHCHR request additional financial resources, and ensure appropriate internal resource allocation, to service more efficiently the work of the treaty bodies, inter alia, as a result of the additional ratification of human rights instruments resulting from the universal periodic review, as well as the overall enhancement and development of the treaty body system.

Independence of experts

(m) The seventh inter-committee meeting reaffirmed the solemn statement made by the eighth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies (A/52/507, paras. 67-68) in 1997 about the necessity to safeguard the independence of treaty body experts.

Access to treaty body deliberations

(n) The seventh inter-committee meeting recommended that OHCHR explore alternative means of facilitating the broadest public access to the treaty body public examinations of periodic reports, including the possibility of webcasting and using other modern technologies.

Cooperation with non-governmental organizations

(o) The seventh inter-committee meeting underlined the value of broad NGO participation, including equitable geographical representation in the work of treaty bodies. The secretariat was encouraged to facilitate the participation of national NGOs from all countries, and in particular from developing countries.

(p) The seventh inter-committee meeting reiterated previous recommendations that NGOs send information well in advance of treaty body sessions to allow committee members the opportunity to take those important submissions into account, including for the preparation of lists of issues, and to continue to disseminate the conclusions of the treaty bodies and report on their implementation.

National human rights institutions

(q) The seventh inter-committee meeting reiterated its previous recommendations that treaty bodies continue their cooperation with national human rights institutions that conform to the Paris Principles (General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex). In addition, it encouraged continued dialogue with the bureau of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights to enhance and strengthen the interaction between national human rights institutions and treaty bodies, in line with the current practice of certain treaty bodies.

Form and structure of lists of issues

(r) The seventh inter-committee meeting acknowledged the usefulness of lists of issues prepared and transmitted to States parties in advance of the consideration of initial and periodic reports. While the content of lists of issues remains at the discretion of each treaty body, within its competence, the inter-committee meeting may wish to identify and discuss best practices in relation to their format and the structure, especially in order to address more focused lists of issues to State parties.

Joint general comments

(s) In the light of previous experiences of treaty bodies, the seventh inter-committee meeting noted the usefulness of exploring the possibility of issuing joint general comments. It encouraged treaty bodies to actively consider the discussion and adoption of joint general comments and reiterated that such general comments should only refer to common thematic issues, not treaty provisions, and recommended that OHCHR actively support such a process.

Terminology and cross-referencing the work of other treaty bodies

(t) The seventh inter-committee meeting requested the Secretariat to inform the inter-committee meeting of the practices of treaty bodies with regard to terminology and cross-references to the work of other treaty bodies. The inter-committee meeting will revisit this issue in the course of 2009.

Ratification of the core international human rights treaties

(u) The seventh inter-committee meeting reiterated that, in their constructive dialogue with States parties and in their concluding observations, all the treaty bodies should actively promote ratification of the other core international human rights treaties, consistent with their working practice, in particular the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Statistical information relating to human rights

(v) The seventh inter-committee meeting welcomed the report submitted by the Secretariat in pursuance of the recommendations of the fifth and sixth inter-committee meetings regarding the use of statistical information in monitoring the implementation of human rights (HRI/MC/2008/3). It encouraged the Secretariat to take the work forward, including through further validation at the country level, at the level of specific treaty bodies and by developing appropriate resource materials and tools to operationalize and disseminate its work. In undertaking that task in collaboration with relevant United Nations entities and other institutions, such as national human rights institutions, the Secretariat should bear in mind the need to contextualize further the adopted framework for identifying indicators and statistical information in accordance with the requirements of different treaty bodies. The Secretariat was requested to brief all treaty bodies periodically, especially those that had not yet been briefed, as well as to consult with them and, in its next report to the inter-committee meeting in 2009, to present a timeline for the completion of a full set of indicators.

The United Nations Study on Violence against Children

(w) The seventh inter-committee meeting highlighted the important role played by all human rights treaty bodies in promoting the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations Study on Violence against Children and addressing violence-related issues through their work. The inter-committee meeting further acknowledged the need for a thorough exchange between the treaty bodies on the different approaches to violence against children and for more focused attention on prevention of violence.

Business and human rights

(x) Following the interest expressed by participants during the sixth inter-committee meeting in continuing to engage with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, the seventh inter-committee meeting recommended that treaty bodies encourage NGOs and national human rights institutions to provide them with information on human rights abuses perpetrated by transnational corporations and other business enterprises.